

DRAFT

Remarks of First Lady Marsha Barbour

Groundbreaking of Marsha Barbour Community Resource Center

May 10, 2007

Pass Christian, Mississippi

Thank you all for coming.

When I was first approached about the possibility of naming this new community resource center, I said to Haley, “Are you sure they’ve got the right Barbour?”

When I told him a little more about it, he said, “Oh, yes, they’ve got the right Barbour.”

So here we are today, preparing to break ground on a new community center I am honored will bear my name. But, as those of you who know me so well also know, I’m not used to this sort of recognition. My practice has been to work quietly, behind the scenes, being Haley’s eyes and ears but not saying too much about what I see and hear to anyone but him.

Sometimes, he even listens! He may be Governor of Mississippi, but he’s also my husband of 35 years, the father of our two sons, and grandfather to our grandson, so he better listen!

Today, I share the stage not only with my husband but also with you.

The Pass Christian/DeLisle Community Center, Inc. was founded in 2005 in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. Your main purpose is to provide the community with the tools necessary to lift people out of poverty and help them reassemble the pieces of their lives.

I am behind you one hundred percent, just as strong leaders are behind this project, both here in this community and beyond:

Reverend Rosemary Williams, a retired Pass Christian School District teacher and pastor of the DeLisle Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, and Reverend Theodore Williams; Attorney Shantrell Nicks; Gautier High School Principal Myrick Nicks; and Pass Christian Chamber of Commerce

President Scott Naugle have joined the board, along with Ellen Ratner, Captain Cholene Espinoza and Ronald Ratner.

I want to thank you all. Cho is quoted as saying I felt my work for the Gulf Coast was out of love and duty to all Mississippians, and of course that's true. Like I said, this sort of public recognition is a little foreign to me.

I gratefully accept the name the board chose as long as you know that I know many other names are just as deserving.

I am very happy this new community resource center will serve a public purpose but will be built entirely with privately donated funds. That in and of itself sends a very strong message about how deeply you and other contributors care about the people in the communities of Pass Christian and DeLisle, Mississippi.

This will be a 6,000 square foot dedicated resource center to address the long term needs of the community in job training assistance, life rebuilding, after school educational programs, counseling, sports and the arts.

Fittingly, it will also be built on high ground so it will also serve as an emergency shelter, which is icing on the cake.

I want to say a special word of gratitude and appreciation to Cholene Espinoza and Ellen Ratner, whose work in the aftermath of Katrina and on this project has known no limits. They've given a piece of their lives to the important mission of recovery.

Ellen is Washington bureau chief for the Talk Radio News Service and a regular contributor on the Fox News Channel. Cho personally purchased and donated the land for the new center in the days immediately following the storm, hoping to give the community a place to gather on high ground. She has written a book about her experiences in the community, titled, "Through the Eye of the Storm," with all proceeds donated to the center.

Together, the team has raised over a million dollars for the center's construction, including grants from the Mississippi Hurricane Recovery Fund and DuPont Hurricane Katrina Fund. The National Basketball Association through its NBA Cares program pledged to build a full-size

basketball court and conduct a local camp this summer for local children ages 9-13 taught by NBA celebrities.

This will be a very special place and its construction will mark another milestone in a long journey since Katrina hit us. Beginning the very night of the storm, I began coming to the Coast; working with first responders; finding help for people with special needs; encouraging local officials.

I told Haley of the strength, resilience and self-reliance of the people who had been knocked flat. I also told him of their can-do spirit and how -- even early on -- they were determined to get up and on with recovery and rebuilding. Even today, I have a hard time talking about just how much of an inspiration the people of the Coast are to me.

Haley said the people of the Coast just hitched up their britches and went to work. I guess that says it pretty well.

I see that sort of determined spirit in your eyes today. You are still standing tall, just as this center will stand tall as a pillar of strength in a community that will come back bigger and better

To let me stand with you, for you to give this center my name, are among the highest honors in my life, and I thank you. We will stand together today, tomorrow, and every day in the years ahead.

God bless you, and thank you all.

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